thors suggest that school children should memorize?

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Atrocious Research

At first I wondered whether "What's the Capital of North Dakota?" (February 1984) was a joke or parody. Then I thought it was an example of the kind of terrible research some undergraduate education students might do if left unsupervised. But no, despite some good one-liners, it was not a joke, and June Buhler is actually an Associate Professor. This is, apparently, a serious article, and I am appalled.

As a starter, one might wonder what criteria were used to identify "successful people" as "prosperous or happy." Were Jesus, Demosthenes, Dostoevski, Nietzsche, and Beethoven prosperous or happy? Were they unsuccessful? Didn't John Stuart Mill say something to the effect that it was better to be a discontented Socrates than a happy pig? Then we may wonder how the authors' "successful" people might compare with unsuccessful ones, but apparently this never occurred to them. And since there is a mass of research correlating economic success ("prosperity") with levels of educational achievement, doesn't the authors' research prove exactly what they say it disproves? That is, college graduates are more prosperous ("successful") than high school graduates, and their recall of facts is indeed higher (48 percent compared to 33 percent)! Again, are the authors opposed to people *knowing* facts or learning them in certain ways?

The overall impression one gets from the article is that knowledge of facts is of little use. Before I would agree with the authors, I think a much more thorough investigation into the teaching and learning of factual matters is required. As it stands, the article is a jumble of anti-intellectual slogans, dubious logic, and atrocious research.

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The State of Reading

In your February issue you carried provocative (I hope) observations on the state of reading in our present society. Just today I discovered a review of *Reading in the 1980s* (Bowker, 1983), which is primarily a reissue of the Winter 1983 issue of *Daedalus*. I urge your readers to secure either the journal or the book; the contributors are respected scholars and critics whose views are well worth pondering.

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